

against the United States, its agencies or instrumentalities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
September 11, 1997.

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**Remarks at a Congressional Reception**

*September 11, 1997*

Thank you very much. Thank you, Al. Thank you, Tipper. Thank you, Marianne, and to Trent and Tricia, and the Speaker was here earlier—to all of you, thank you for coming.

We tried to put speakers up in the other rooms. We can't get everyone in here. Sometimes the best laid plans don't work. I love it when there's a picnic outside, but if we'd done this last night, all of our food would have been destroyed. And then if we'd done it tonight—it's not raining, but right before you came it rained, so all of our food would have been destroyed again. And we thought at least we ought to feed you well. [Laughter]

But there is a long history of this. I actually thought the Vice President was going to tell you the story of the very first time a President had the Congress to the White House. John Adams was the first President to live here. He spent the last 4 or 5 months of his term in the White House. And the first time he invited Congress here, it was a bitter, bitter cold day in Washington. And as you can imagine, back in 1800 we didn't have any central heat. So John and Abigail Adams literally, themselves, as the Congress Members and their families were coming in, were going from room to room, from fireplace to fireplace. They started with 20 cords of wood; they were trying to throw them into the fireplace and get the fire started. You can imagine how it was. And when they finished it—they'd work themselves to death—they looked around; it was so cold all the Mem-

bers of Congress were filing out. So at least you haven't left yet. I feel I'm ahead. [Laughter]

I'd like to say a special word about two groups of people here tonight. First of all, all of you who brought your families, I thank you for doing that. I love seeing the children here. There's one child here I especially like to see, Senator Boxer's grandson, because he's also my nephew, and there he is. I'm glad to see him. I'm glad all the children are here.

The second thing I'd like to do is to say—I haven't got a list here, so I'll get myself in trouble—but I want to mention especially with appreciation, Lee Hamilton, Elizabeth Furse, and every other Member of Congress of either party who is retiring at the end of this session. Thank you for your service to the United States of America, and thank you for being here tonight. We're very grateful to you.

Finally let me say, as Tipper said, Hillary wanted to be here tonight, but she's going to Mother Teresa's funeral, and I think it very important that we send a delegation there. I know there's also a congressional delegation going, and I think that is a very appropriate thing to do.

I hope we'll go on, have a little fun tonight. We'll hear more from the Floating Opera—what a great name. I feel like that's what we are, half the time. [Laughter] Then we're going to go in the room over here and shake hands with anybody that wants to come by. But I stood in the hall for awhile and tried to visit with as many of you as I could—do not feel that you have to. This is not an obligatory receiving line. There is no obligation here tonight except to try to have a good time.

Let's give the band a big hand and listen to them. [Applause]

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:14 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Marianne Gingrich, wife of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, and Tricia Lott, wife of Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. Originally planned as the congressional barbecue, the reception was moved to the East Room due to inclement weather.

**Remarks Announcing the  
Nomination of Dr. David Satcher To  
Be Surgeon General and an  
Exchange With Reporters**  
*September 12, 1997*

**The President.** Thank you very much. Madam Secretary, our distinguished guests representing the health professions, to the Satcher family, and ladies and gentlemen.

Just yesterday, we learned of the strong public health progress our Nation has been making in recent years. We learned that last year, infant mortality declined to a record low, prenatal care reached a record high, the teen birth rate declined for the fifth straight year, and death from HIV and AIDS declined more than 25 percent. These are huge gains for public health, and much of the credit goes to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and their gifted leader, Dr. David Satcher.

As you heard from the Vice President, Dr. Satcher's many accomplishments are built on a deep foundation of personal experience. On the small corn and peanut farm where he grew up, he relied on a dedicated country doctor, the only African-American doctor in the area, to come to his family's side in times of need. That man, named Dr. Jackson, helped save David Satcher's life, and then he and other mentors and family members inspired him to dedicate his life to caring for the health of other people's families.

They inspired a man, whose parents didn't have the opportunity to finish elementary school, to himself become the first black M.D., Ph.D. in the history of Case Western Reserve University, then go on to become President of Meharry Medical College and the Director of the world-renowned Centers for Disease Control.

In part, because of the inspiration of his family doctor, David Satcher is uniquely qualified to be America's family doctor. He's a mainstream physician with a talent for leadership. And I'm proud to announce that I intend to nominate him to be both Assistant Secretary for Health and the Surgeon General of the United States.

Only once before has the President asked one person to fill two of the Nation's most prominent public health offices. I do so today

because in his role as Director of the CDC, the agency that is the world's best defense against disease, David Satcher has demonstrated his profound medical expertise and eloquent advocacy for the Nation's public health. He's helped to lead our fight to improve the safety of our food, to wipe out the scourge of emerging infectious diseases, to expand access to vital cancer screening.

I particularly want to thank him for guiding our childhood immunization initiative. Child immunization levels have now reached an all-time high, and cases of childhood diseases that can be prevented by vaccines are at an all-time low.

Now I look forward to working with Dr. Satcher on our most important public health mission, to free our children from the grip of tobacco. Every year, more Americans die from smoking-related diseases than from AIDS, car accidents, murders, and suicides combined. And we all know if people don't begin to smoke in their teens, it's unlikely they will ever begin to do so. We have to make the most of this historic opportunity to protect our children against the dangers of tobacco by passing sweeping legislation that focuses first and foremost on reducing smoking among our young people. And he will lead our Nation's efforts on many other health issues, as well.

Over the past three decades of serving the health needs of our Nation, David Satcher has earned the highest respect of public health officials around the Nation and, indeed, all around the world. No one is better qualified to be America's doctor. No one is better qualified to be the Nation's leading voice for health for all of us. And I am grateful that he is willing to serve.

Before I call on Dr. Satcher to speak, let me make one more comment about another nomination. I'm very disappointed that my nominee for United States Ambassador to Mexico, Governor Weld, did not receive a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today.

Because our relationship with Mexico is so very important to our security and to our economy, I want an Ambassador who can represent all Americans. In a spirit of bipartisanship, I selected a highly qualified individual in the Republican Governor of Massachu-